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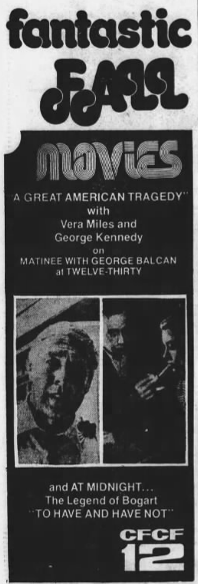

Manitas de Plata leaves fans wanting more

By NIGHTHAWK
of The Gazette

Guitarist Manitas de Plata is no stranger to Montreal — and last night his fans filled Salle Wilfrid Pelletier to the rafters. When the show ended, they were clamoring for more.

Accompanying him last night were three guitarists — Jose Villa, Pablo Reyes and Bambo Ballardo — with the last two featured also as singers.

Reyes seemed to have trouble with his throat and only performed group songs or alternating choruses with Baliardo.

Baliardo has a fine voice and a good sense of flamenco, save that he is a bit young and short on depth of feeling — except when it comes to joy.

But then, Manitas de Plata is not for sophisticated purists and his show is more in the realm of variety.

As such, the show is excellent. Last night opened with the back-up group performing flamenco-flavored pop songs. Then Manitas made his entrance, greeted by enthused bravos. He opened, leg up on one of the four rustic chairs on stage, and played a ballad full of rippling runs, which he delivered with dexterity and finesse.

WINKED

In response to the applause, he threw kisses and winked at his favorite pick of ladies in the front row.

Then he played another ballad, and disdaining his microphone — which was too low — he stepped to the edge of the stage and serenaded, unamplified.

There is something touching about unamplified solo guitar, in such a huge auditorium, when the public is so spellbound that you can hear yourself breathe. And Manitas can create that kind of magic whenever he choses.

The show moved on at a brisk pace, alternating two guitars and Manitas, three guitars and two singers, one guitar and Manitas and some group singing.

When it comes to the group, Los Baliardos sing pop tunes with a strong Cuban flavor (which has come to be called Latin). It is very diluted flamenco, but it moves people and is tangibly warm and happy.

ARABIC

Manitas is a Gypsy, and he plays flamenco: Dance tunes, love songs, ballads, romances, sevillanas and fandangos. He even played a tune that sounded totally Arabic — beautifully so.

There were three encores, been artistically depicted by and had Manitas been willing, he would still have been playing tomorrow.

Manitas de Plata, who performed last night at Place des Arts.

Cop shows unrealistic

LOS ANGELES — (UPI) — Television has gotten away from the old flat-footed, pot-bellied cop which used to dominate the movie screen. But that's about all.

TV producers and writers come to Lt. Dan Cooke of the Los Angeles Police Department for technical advice. Unfortunately, they rarely take it and Cooke says there is little semblance between a real cop and the hero one sees on the television screen.

Only two shows, Cooke says, accurately portrayed police officers. They are Dragnet and Adam 12, both now out of production.

Aut'Chose in PdeA concert: Poetry from out of the tavern

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
for The Gazette

Last night was a big one for Aut'Chose. The Montreal rock quintet, led by poet Lucien Francoeur, made its debut at Place des Arts (performing at Theatre Maisonneuve with Offenbach) and released its second album, entitled Une nuit comme une autre.

The group's rise has been sudden. They followed the footsteps of Beau Dommage by offering the Quebecois rock public a rougher, crude image; they have been known as the local equivalent of the Rolling Stones. Musically the comparison is hardly apt, but Aut'Chose have managed to create its own localized version of street life.

Francoeur sings as if he stepped out of a tavern with poetry in hand. He has a monotone voice, which he uses to best advantage by spouting cool matter-of-fact existential street cliches — "chez nous" style. Thus the singer-poet has followed up the hits from the first album, such as Le Freak de Montreal and La Vie Weston, with further East-End epistles such as Nancy Beaudin, Blue Jeans Sur la Plage, and Hit and Run.

In Vancouver: Une Nuit Comme Une Autre, Francoeur looks out his window, an ex-patriot with Montreal in his head, and imagines himself as Jim Morrison in Paris.

While the influences of Aut'Chose are all well-known, Francoeur and cohorts have created a fairly original kind of music. He takes off from the rock mythology by translating it onto a comic book Montreal street level. Francoeur is a wry anti-hero who seems to love every minute of it.

He looks more like a St. Denis coffee house poet than a rock star, enlarged mutton chops compensating for a cleared forehead and hip-hugging jeans creating illusions with a slight pot belly.

The rest of the group churns out a high volume soundtrack behind Francoeur. They've developed a higher intensity since the first album, moving from slightly continentalized acid rock to a tougher more soaring Pink Floyd derivation. Electric guitarist Pierre Gauthier de La Verendrye and keyboardist Jacques Racine inflict most of the damage; they are not original but they do create a powerful grade- B effect behind the singer.

If Francoeur deals in dead-pan melodrama, his band makes sure to provide a suitably blaring psychedelic "Edge of Night" backing.

Offenbach, reviewed in these pages recently, is also a derivation — a Quebecois version of rock-blues that is more noteworthy for its unabashed volume than musical ideas.

Lucien Francoeur, the poet-leader of rock-quintet Aut'Chose.

What happened to Hayley Mills? She's adding little to London play

By JAMIE PORTMAN
Southam News Services

LONDON — Remember Hayley Mills? Back in the late Fifties and early Sixties, she was one of the few child stars who didn't make you want to retch.

She was the beguiling moppet who fell into the criminal clutches of Horst Buchholz in Tiger Bay. She made the character of the sugar-sweet Pollyanna palatable in the Disney film of the same name. She was cute and talented. Whatever happened to her?

What happened was that she grew up and lost much of her charm. She also scandalized many of her admirers and also her parents, John Mills and Mary Hayley Bell, by falling for veteran director Roy Boulting, a man old enough to be her grandfather. But that's another story.

The Hayley Mills on view at the Comedy Theatre in London is by no means unpleasant to gaze upon. She's pretty, and she speaks her lines. In other words, she does what several hundred other out-of-work actresses would be capable of doing.

Yet, her name obviously continues to mean something at the box-office, which is why she's attracting capacity audiences to a second-rate comedy by Samuel Taylor called Touch Of Spring.

AFFAIR

As a play, it's not in the same league as Taylor's earlier successes, Sabrina Fair and The Pleasure of His Company. Mills plays a young English lady newly arrived in Rome to claim the body of her mother, recent victim of an auto accident. She meets up with a wealthy American (Francis Matthews) newly arrived in Rome to claim the body of his father, also the victim of an auto accident. It transpired that the two deceased had been conducting a love affair for more than a decade by means of annual assignations in Italy.

HAYLEY MILLS
. . . Pollyanna days

Taking a leaf from the book of their respective parents, Mills and Matthews embark on a similar affair. Looking on approvingly is a volatile Italian romantic energetically portrayed by Leigh Lawson.

Playwright Taylor's basic situation is interesting enough, but his development of it is trite. What we end up with is a singularly unoriginal love comedy, inelegantly garnished with tiresome jokes about the idiocies of Italian government red tape.

Whatever impact the play has depends on the strength of the characterizations. Matthews and Lawson work like mad to give some spark to the proceedings and also, I suspect, to prop up the fragile talent of their leading lady who is billed as the star of the show.

SCRUPULOUS

Not a strand of Hayley Mills' hair is out of place. She obviously has a scrupulous dresser backstage. She smiles pleasantly and speaks pleasantly. She attempts to look interested in events going on around her. Despite the height of the heels on her shoes, she manages to navigate the stage without falling. When other characters on-stage talk, she attempts to give the impression she's listening intelligently. But there's no sense of character in her portrayal, no real success in relating to others. She's as pretty and unreal as a cheap bargain-basement painting.

Were we wrong about the remarkable talent we saw in her as a child? Can the blame for this empty, unconvincing performance be laid at the feet of the play's director, Allan Davis? Or has her talent simply abandoned her?

To see how well this character can be played, take a look at a Billy Wilder film of a couple of years back called Avanti. This was the movie version of Taylor's play, and in that one, the role of the girl was played most winningly and affectingly by Juliet Mills, who just happens to be Hayley's older sister and who for many years was considered the lesser talent of the two. Now, there's something to mull over.

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